

*Attitudes Towards Human Spirituality in Goethe's Faust and Marlowe's Dr.  
Faustus*

*Extended Essay*

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Word Count: 4000 words  
January 2007*

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*Abstract*

The Faust legend, in which an academic desperate to gain knowledge and power sells his soul to the Devil, is one which has (re-)emerged at various times of religious and philosophical upheaval, from the formation of the Christian Church to the Reformation and the Romantic movement. This paper will compare the interpretations of human spirituality as presented in two key re-tellings of this story. Two defining interpretations of this story are the plays of Marlowe and Goethe, *Dr. Faustus* and *Faust*, which, while based on the same character, use him to express very different attitudes regarding human spirituality. Close examination suggests that Marlowe's play is ultimately orthodox in its portrayal of the punishment of man for pride and despair, through its use of the conventions of Morality Plays, its use of traditional symbols, such as witchcraft and devils, and its emphasis on the power of the individual will which ultimately damns Faustus. Goethe's text, on the other hand, while still playing with the theme of the individual will, saves the protagonist, suggesting an alternate spiritual vision where the striving of the individual justifies redemption. This rejection of a classical Christian paradigm is emphasized in *Faust* through Goethe's criticism of other entrenched institutions, such as the monarchy, and the introduction of figures from classical mythology. While one play represents traditional religious attitudes, another transcends them.

Word Count: 244

S Gutnick Allen

*Table of Contents*

Introduction : Background to the Faust Legend	1
The Characteristics of the Morality Play in Marlowe's <i>Dr. Faustus</i>	3
Emphasis on Personal Will in Marlowe's <i>Dr. Faustus</i>	5
The Intermingling of Good and Evil in Goethe's <i>Faust</i>	7
Goethe's portrayal of Mephistopheles	9
Further Evidence of Goethe's Attitude Towards Entrenched Institutions	10
Goethe's new Vision of Spirituality	11
Conclusion	12

S Gutnick Allen

*Attitudes Towards Human Spirituality in Goethe's Faust and Marlowe's Dr. Faustus*

The tale of Faust has always been more than simply a story: as a symbol of human pride the scholar who 'o'rreaches' religious boundaries in the desire for super-human knowledge has attained mythical status in the subconscious of Western European civilization. The story can be seen as a parable expressing the limitations of humanity in its relationship with God, thus re-enforcing 'standard' religious assumptions. Alternately, it could be used to question the very tenets of a religious paradigm. While there are versions of a Faust story reaching back to the early sixteenth century, it is today most associated with the plays *Doctor Faustus* (1592) by Christopher Marlowe and *Faust* (1808/1832) by Johann Goethe. These two works illustrate how the same story can be used to demonstrate two contrasting philosophies: thoroughly different attitudes towards the Christian religion are portrayed through a tale that is ultimately religious in nature. Whereas Marlowe follows the original Faust story closely, creating a work which remains critical of human pride and ambition, Goethe's play, with its conclusion differing significantly from that of the original tale, ultimately operates on an entirely new series of assumptions regarding human spirituality. Not only do these two works show us how human perceptions of traditional religious positions have shifted over time, through the changing views (or changing degrees of artistic freedom) of key artists of their era, but also how founding myths of humanity can be adapted to new intellectual movements.

The story of a man selling his soul to the devil has a relatively long history in the Christian European tradition. Characters such as Simon Magus<sup>1</sup>, Theophilus of Syracuse, St. Cyprian and number of men known as 'Faust' all contributed to the image of the striving academic playing farcical tricks using demonic power<sup>2</sup>. Appearing in Germany in

<sup>1</sup> The Simonian Myth, involving 'his rhetorical skill and knowledge of astronomy, his conjuring before the Emperor at Rome, his apotheosis of a re-incarnated Helen of Troy and finally of his being dashed down when Peter frustrates his attempted flight to heaven', has no precise source, but appears to originate in a character present at the same time as the Apostles. Source: Brockbank, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Theophilus of Syracuse, another character who supposedly made a pact with the devil, comes from a story in the sixth-century A.D. The legend of St. Cyprian deals again with magical feats conducted with the aid of a demon and is dealt with primarily in the 17<sup>th</sup> century play *El Magico Prodigioso* by Calderon. Source: Brockbank, pp. 12-13. There were a series of possible original 'Fausts' throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, especially in Germanic areas. Source: Brockbank, p. 12.



S Gutnick Allen

1548 at roughly the same time as the Reformation, the original *Faustbuch* was essentially used as propaganda for new Protestant ideas.<sup>3</sup> There is evidence that many early Protestants thought the theatre an excellent way of promoting religious values among the uneducated population<sup>i</sup>; the combination of the story and the theatre would have appealed to Protestant authorities as a means to promote religious ideology. Indeed, the *Faustbuch*<sup>4</sup> was Marlowe's main source when he wrote his play<sup>ii</sup>. Given the duality of the work—both as potentially blasphemous in its engagement with some of the more complex aspects of Christianity and as a warning of the most dire order—it is not surprising that this is a story associated historically with times of religious upheaval and grand paradigmatic shifts.

The traditional Faustus story is an example of purely orthodox Christian theology. It acts as a warning to those who would 'practice more than heavenly power permits.'<sup>iii</sup> Some critics, such as Nicholas Brooke<sup>iv</sup>, have argued that Marlowe's play, despite its adherence to a traditional Christian storyline, is in fact religiously subversive through its portrayal of man's struggle for freedom of belief and will against what Brockbank calls a 'hostile moral order'<sup>v</sup>. This view is re-enforced by the mysterious lack of God's presence at the end of the play where Faustus is damned with seemingly no recourse to the power or grace of heaven. Further examples are found when Faustus cries out that he 'see[s] where God/ Stretcheth out his arm and bends his ireful brows!'<sup>vi</sup> and earlier when Faustus calls out 'Ah, Christ, my Saviour,/ Seek to save distressed Faustus' soul' but only Lucifer, Mephistopheles ad Beelzebub appear.<sup>vii</sup> Thus God either does not want to save Faustus, rendering him malevolent, or God cannot save him, rendering him feeble<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> The *Faustbuch* has been called 'a Protestant pamphlet, not only because its Lutheran compiler put in a lot of anti-papist matter but also because it distances the intercessionary agencies of the church and lets Faustus come personally to terms with God and the devil.' Source: Brockbank, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Published in a translation in English from the German in 1592 under the title *The Historie of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Dr. John Faustus*. Source: Kott, p. 3

<sup>5</sup> Critics who endorse this view often mention Marlowe's own spiritual position, pointing out that someone who was charged with atheism and made disparaging comments regarding the organized church was unlikely to have written something re-enforcing the traditional position of this very establishment. Marlowe is reported to have said 'That things esteemed to be donn by devine power might as well have been don by observation of men' Source: White, p. 72 and 'The first beginning of religion was only to keep men in awe'. Source: White, pp. 81-82 It has been suggested, in an attempt to both reconcile Marlowe's personal view with the play and to account for the presence of two distinct versions of the play, that the original Dr. Faustus was heavily censored, resulting in the much shorter A text; and that Marlowe originally wrote a play which was truly heterodox. Source: Empson, pp. 44-45. However interesting this speculation may be it

S Gutnick Allen

The form of the play itself, however, closely follows that of the traditional medieval morality plays. The presence of figures such as the Good Angel and Bad Angel were typical of this genre; they provide the audience with an indication of the gravity of the situation Faustus' soul is in, as well as reminding them of the position they should be taking as, at least nominally, 'good Christians'. The majority of Marlowe's original audience would have taken the presence of these angels at face value, just as they would have assumed the veracity of the existence of devils, witches and other supernatural beings. Even if we assume that the angels represent purely an internal struggle within Faustus's soul, the play is hardly heterodox in showing man to be divided. The portrayal of the angels themselves is serious and lacking in the irony that would have allowed them to become anti-religious symbols<sup>6</sup>. Through the speech of the Angels, the connection between knowledge and power is established early on, and the Evil Angels' speech makes us think of the falls of both Lucifer (who sought power, to 'be [as] Jove') and Adam (who ate from the tree of knowledge without God's consent). The connection between Faust and his two fallen predecessors is made explicit through an early dialogue between Mephistopheles and Faustus when Mephistopheles tells Faustus that 'By aspiring pride and insolence' God threw Lucifer from heaven and speaks to him of his torment in 'being deprived of everlasting bliss.' This contradicts the argument that what we are witnessing is the unjust punishment of man for his own heroic ambitions put forward by some critics<sup>7</sup>. By presenting his tale in the morality play tradition, Marlowe instead apparently aligns himself with the Church. This lack of repentance is indeed suggestive of a personal heterodoxy, and yet it is still punished. Unlike traditional morality plays, *Dr. Faustus* 'does not provide a sober assessment of his mistaken actions and a reasoned recantation

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has not been conclusively proven and we must therefore turn our attention to the play we have not the one which Marlowe may have intended to write.

<sup>6</sup> For example, in their first appearance in Scene 1, lines 72 to 79 the Good Angel presents the traditional religious views of the time: God has 'heavy wrath' for those who pursue hidden knowledge via 'damned book[s]'. The Evil Angel, in contrast, tempts Faustus with the idea that 'nature's treasury' (i.e. knowledge) is to be obtained through the study of necromancy and that this will lead to his being 'on earth as Jove is in the sky, / Lord and commander of these elements'. Source: Marlowe, p. 349

<sup>7</sup> Tydeman has suggested that Faustus can be viewed as 'a spiritual pioneer, seeking to clear away the obstacles placed in the way of man's progress by a repressive god.' Source: Tydeman, p. 12. He also notes that George Santayana has called Faustus 'a martyr to everything that the renaissance prized—power, curious knowledge, enterprise, wealth and beauty.' Source: Tydeman, p. 17.



S Gutnick Allen

of a misspent life”<sup>viii</sup>--Marlowe's play is darker in that it never gives Faustus the capacity to repent. Marlowe finally gives us a play showing the perils of disbelief, a story which feels more appropriate for a time when traditional attitudes towards religion and the order of the world were being increasingly questioned.

It is perhaps for this reason that while a traditional morality play might portray the results of a life marked by one or more of the seven sins, in this play these, on their own, are not portrayed as serious threats.<sup>8</sup> Instead, a sin far more serious is portrayed: that of despair in God. Faustus' despair, based on an incomplete reading of the scriptures is already present from the very beginning of the play in his first soliloquy. Faustus, reading selections from the Bible reads that ‘The reward of sin is death’ and ‘If we say that we have no sin/ We deceive ourselves’. He not only notes ‘That’s hard’ but assumes from reading these passages that ‘what will be, shall be’, rejecting the possibility of one’s actions influencing the hope of salvation<sup>ix</sup>. While moments of doubt are considered acceptable (one thinks of Jesus’ cry ‘My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?’) the danger of despair, essentially a state of perpetual doubt, is that it will lead to a rejection of faith in God, which is indeed what happens to Faustus. His despair is clear when he says to himself ‘Now, Faustus, must thou needs be damned, /And canst thou not be saved. / What boots it then to think of God or Heaven? ... Despair in God and trust in Beelzebub...To God? He loves thee not.’<sup>x</sup> This analysis renders the issue of Faustus’ pride less important, though it is clearly linked to his spiritual state<sup>9</sup>. By portraying the devil as one who promotes despair by playing on the natural doubt of man, Marlowe goes further than the original Faust story, where pride alone is the prime cause for Faust’s damnation.

<sup>8</sup> This is clearly illustrated in Scene 7 of *Dr. Faustus* when the Seven Sins appear, brought forth by Lucifer as entertainment for Faustus. Their show is referred to as ‘some pastime’ by Lucifer (Scene 7, line 100) and they are each in turn dismissed disdainfully by Faustus. Source: Marlowe, pp 371-372.

<sup>9</sup> Throughout the play, despair is linked to pride--Faustus' fantastic desires, as expressed to Mephistopheles in Scene 4, come at the heels of his rejection of God, suggesting that as he loses faith in God he lusts increasingly after power--and thus we see Faustus enter a doomed cycle where because of his despair and resulting pride he commits acts which he believes cannot be forgiven and which only intensifies his despair at the loss of salvation. The idea that Faustus has somehow managed to achieve such sins as to place himself beyond the grace of God is in itself a type of pride, if a perverse one, as throughout the play there are continuous references to the all-encompassing nature of this grace. Source: Simkin, p. 60

S Gutnick Allen

The use of traditional Christian symbols throughout his play is important: the devil is shown to be a trickster, and wholly evil. Other examples of traditional symbols include the portrayal of witches, necromancy and Walpurgis Night, as well as Faustus' involvement in the sin of demonality (with a succubus in the form of Helen of Troy, who herself was seen as a 'sign and omen of doom'<sup>xi</sup> in the sixteenth century). All of these elements would have served not only as sensational entertainment for the audience but to further identify Faustus' surroundings with evil rather than with freedom and knowledge.<sup>10</sup> By tapping into the realm of symbols familiar to his audience, Marlowe exposes his character to their judgment even without this character's actions being taken into account. The fact that the author decided to include symbols such as these also suggests that for his audience, the metaphysical struggles of the play were very real. As Patrick Healy notes, 'Faustus' debating proposition to Mephistopheles that 'I think Hell's a fable would have seemed either chillingly naïve or comically preposterous...and would almost have had no persuasiveness with contemporary audience'<sup>xii</sup> and the scenes of his torture and final damnation 'cater to conventional notions of God's retribution for a life of sin.'<sup>xiii</sup> The message re-enforced by all of Faustus' accomplishments is that the bargain was not advantageous. Was the procurement of grapes (which remind the audience of fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil) for a duchess in Scene 12 worth the torment Faustus so obviously experiences at the end of the play?

It has been suggested that the play portrays a Calvinistic, deterministic view of salvation<sup>11</sup>. This suggests the portrayal of a critical view of religion: Faustus' sins have been placed in him *by* God and thus Faustus is correct to refuse to repent, as he would be damned regardless. If we take this view, Faustus' actions in the final scene are heroic in that by consciously *choosing* to be damned Faustus is a hero of free will as he is determining his fate and refusing to be ruled by it. However, in the text we see, in addition to references to a harsh god which would indicate a Calvinist perspective,

<sup>10</sup> Redner has suggested that Faustus can be seen as a form of 'counter-Christ' throughout the play: the refusal of his blood to flow, in contrast with the blood of Christ, which 'streams in the firmament'; his use of the last words of Christ—*Consummatum est*—to complete his contract with the devil; his final supper with his colleagues and his instructions to them which are contrary to those of Christ's to his apostils on the Last Supper. These contrasts would have been apparent to the audience and strengthened the impression of Faust as ignoble. Source: Redner, p.194

<sup>11</sup> In this view, Faustus indeed cannot be saved, as the 'elect' who go the Heaven are pre-determined by God, and no action, even in Faustus' case repentance, can redeem the soul.



S Gutnick Allen

numerous allusions to the view of God as merciful and compassionate.<sup>12</sup> In fact, it seems that this Renaissance play emphasizes the power of free will over that of fate-- not detracting from the omnipotence of God but re-enforcing the moral duty of man. The play places far too much emphasis on the idea of the Will (with its connotations of free-will and self-will) for the Calvinistic interpretation to be convincing. Not only does Faustus refer to himself in the third person continuously throughout the play, emphasizing the 'will of Faustus', he specifically demands that 'Mephistopheles must always be obedient to my will'; later Faustus specifically says that 'I give it [his soul] thee'<sup>xiv</sup>. There are multiple examples where divine intervention gives Faustus the time to reflect on his actions, indicating that the responsibility for actual choice lies with man. One major example occurs when Faustus' blood ceases to flow at the moment that he means to sign his contract in blood in Scene 5, a protest by what Faustus calls his 'unwilling'<sup>xv</sup> blood. These references outnumber those to a Calvinistic paradigm, which only ever come from Faust and Mephistopheles, hardly the most reliable characters in the play.

Faustus, as portrayed by Marlowe, is thus perhaps not a 'noble character' undone by fate or by despair, despite the original full title of the play<sup>13</sup>. Throughout we see him avoiding responsibility, as when he protests to his fellow scholars in Scene 14 that he would have repented but for the actions of the devil (an excuse that appears weak following the horrific death of the Old Man at the hands of the devils in Scene 13 at the request of Faustus himself) and using his newfound powers for trivial matters, such as cheating a Horse-Courser in Scene 12, despite initially showing a desire for grandeur. We are further encouraged to see Faustus as ridiculous through the actions of three other characters in the play, Wagner, Raffe and Robin. Their imperious demands serve as

<sup>12</sup> Examples of this occur in the dialogue between the Good and Evil Angels in Scene 7 where the Good Angel insists that Faustus can still 'Repent, and they [the devils] shall never raze thy skin' (line 81). Source: Marlowe, p.370. In addition to the message of the Good Angel in Scene 7, the character of the Old Man in Scene 13 tells Faustus that 'I see an angel hovers o'er thy head,/ And with a vial full of precious grace/ Offers to pour the same into thy soul./ Then call for mercy and avoid despair.' in lines 52-6. Source: Marlowe, pp. 388-389. Finally, in the last scene of the play it is only Faustus' own despair which prevents him from repenting. Source: Marlowe, p. 391.

<sup>13</sup> The earliest known title of the work is *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*. Source: Healy, p. 180

S Gutnick Allen

satirical commentary on the main action of the play, which it parallels neatly<sup>14</sup>. Thus the audience reads the message that only fools sell their soul to the devil. The constant interruptions of the more 'serious' plot by these scenes of comedy break up the overall mood of the play, and, combined with Faustus' clear lack of positive attributes, prevent us from truly seeing the play as the tragedy of man's failed defiance against god, making us think instead of the story of an unwise and misguided man.

We thus see in Marlowe an ultimately orthodox reflection on the story of Faustus at the height of the renaissance. In the play written by Goethe, on the other hand, we have a more revolutionary and iconoclastic play. Not only does Goethe's play criticize the foundations of the Christian faith and play on its paradoxes, rejecting organized religion, it ultimately transcends the Christian paradigm altogether.

Goethe's play can be seen as subversive from the first scene. The play opens initially with a prelude on the stage, where the characters of the director, playwright and clown can be seen to represent, if only loosely, God, Faust and Mephistopheles. If we accept this interpretation, our sympathies for the characters to come is already affected: if we see the poet—representing Faust-- as tiresome and the clown, whose calls for entertainment resonate with the crowd, as amusing, then the prelude has worked in already hinting to us that the play will not follow religious dogma in the way that Marlowe's *Faustus* did.

The scene immediately following the prelude is the Prologue in Heaven, a key scene in understanding the religious attitude of the text. By placing the competition for souls between God and devil in the form of a bet, Goethe portrays these figures almost as two gambling friends. This impression is strengthened by their manner of address to each other and the casual tone of the conversation. When God offers Faustus as the 'bait' there are clear parallels to the scene in the book of Job, which raises questions about the existence of evil and the true nature of God's omni-benevolence. By allowing the devil to tempt Faust, God risks damning a soul we will later see to be already 'vulnerable' in its quest for knowledge. Throughout the play there are references to this vulnerability; it is

<sup>14</sup> In the scene immediately following Faustus' first encounter with Mephistopheles Wagner and Robin speak of the selling of souls and Robin jests about the importance of bargaining for the price of something worth 'so dear' (Scene 4, line 13). Source: Marlowe, p. 358.



S Gutnick Allen

striking that a man who supposedly serves God, even 'in confusion'<sup>xvi</sup>, knows as much about necromancy and demonic process as Faust does. This knowledge is displayed in his first interaction with Mephistopheles in Scene 6<sup>xvii</sup>. By presenting evil as the result not of a force diametrically opposed to God (i.e. the devil) but as an occurrence which exists with the collusion of God, Goethe asks us to question basic religious beliefs.

Throughout the work, good and evil often seem to be intermingled and confused: as Mephistopheles says, he is 'Part of that Power which would/ Do evil constantly, and constantly does good.'<sup>xviii</sup> This is exemplified by the passage in which Faust tells the story of a plague which occurred in his youth; he and his father worked to save the people of the town, but 'With those hell-sirups as our remedies, / We, worse than any plague, raged far and wide.'<sup>xix</sup> It thus becomes difficult to tell the difference between helpful and harmful actions. It could even be suggested that the symbol of the father and son healing the population, but with negligible results, is a reflection of the actions of God and Jesus in the world as they could be perceived and judged by an outside force. This intermingling is a direct challenge to a worldview where the concepts of good and evil are clearly defined and in opposition—i.e. a traditional Christian paradigm. The threat of damnation never becomes the pressing issue that it is in Marlowe's play. Whereas in *Dr. Faustus* significant space is dedicated to Faustus' torment in what is a very brief play, Goethe's Faust never expresses the abject terror of hell that Marlowe's does so frequently. We see therefore that the matter of 'goodness' has nothing to do with salvation. This is shown in the farcical way both in which the wager and the 'robbing' of Faust's soul by heaven are treated, in contrast to the seriousness with which Faustus takes his covenant with the devil. In Goethe's *Faust*, for example, the devil is mocked as a 'poor pedant'<sup>xx</sup> for requesting that the wager be written down, in an almost hysterical speech.

Throughout most of the play Mephistopheles gains our sympathy far more than Faust does. At the same time, we have a hard time taking the devil seriously as a representative of supreme evil—if this is our distillation of evil, then it does not seem to be such a threatening concept after all!<sup>15</sup> Faust himself says, not only in a stunning

<sup>15</sup> One example is when Faust traps the Devil against the latter's will in Scene 6 of *Faust: Part One*. Source: Goethe, *Faust: Part One*, p. 43



S Gutnick Allen

display of arrogance, but in a presentation of the modern man's contempt for metaphysical beings, "Poor devil! What can you offer to me? /A mind like yours, how can it comprehend/ A human spirit's high activity?"<sup>xxi</sup> It is in fact the devil who is shocked by Faust's desires for Gretchen and who urges him to wait in his pursuit. His relationship with Faust is much more casual than that between Mephistopheles and Faustus. In addition, he appears to have a more thorough understanding of humankind within the context of the play than the heavenly beings, shown in his assessment that man is "Ridiculous as ever, as in his first days...beastlier than a beast/.../He pokes his nose in all the filth he finds, alas."<sup>xxii</sup> This can be applied to Faust himself, for example, given his insatiable curiosity and way in which he treats other human beings. Throughout this scene, the devil is made more sympathetic and amusing than God or the angels, reflecting the clown in the Prelude. This change in the presentation of the devil affects the relationship between Faust and the devil: whereas in Marlowe's play the devil frequently had to threaten Faust to remain loyal to him here we see man and the devil closer to being friends. This works to distract both Faust and the audience from the idea of damnation, showing that this isn't really what Goethe himself is truly concerned with either.

Goethe's lack of concern about traditional Christian attitudes is also indicated by his decision to transform Wagner, Faust's pretentious and foolish servant, into the voice of traditional morality. The audience is not likely to take anything said by him seriously, and his solemn pronouncements on faith are just as likely to be laughed off as heeded<sup>16</sup>. Another key point comes when Faust pronounces that 'The spirit speaks! I see how it must read,/ And boldly write 'In the beginning was the Deed'<sup>xxiii</sup> in contrast to the original line from the Bible in which it is the Word which is 'In the beginning.' This could be interpreted to mean that what is essential is not that which is said (the laws of religion, which among other things would condemn him to hell) but that which actually happens (in reality he is spared this fate). This belies all three Abrahamic religions, which place emphasis on their respective holy books as either the word of god or of those

<sup>16</sup> One example comes in Scene 6 of *Faust: Part One* when Wagner tries to convince Faust not to conjure demons. Source: Goethe, *Faust Part One*, p. 36. However, in the scene directly previous to this, Scene 5 in the village, Wagner has made fool of himself with his attempted justifications of Faust's behavior during the Plague. Source: Goethe, *Faust Part One*, p. 34.

S Gutnick Allen

divinely inspired. In addition, with its new emphasis on action, the changed line could be seen as reference to the heroic striving which Goethe's work explores.

Goethe's purpose is further illustrated when he goes on to question all forms of traditional and entrenched authority, not just religious ones. In the play he criticizes classical establishments such as universities, the monarchy and churches. For example, the harsh religiosity of society condemns Gretchen for sleeping with Faust before marriage, whereas from the text it is clear that she has the author's sympathy—her tale is not told savagely, but in a manner which expresses outrage at the narrow-minded, shame-filled morality being taught in churches. As well as criticizing clerical institutions, Goethe uses Mephistopheles to reveal flaws in the contemporary education system in Scene 7<sup>17</sup>. This near-constant mockery of established authority, from university professors to the Holy Roman Empire, sets the tone for the work overall. In a work of this nature, it seems impossible that the religious beliefs themselves should be accepted without question.

Further evidence of Goethe's attitude towards Christianity is his introduction of classical deities alongside Christian religious figures, especially throughout Part Two. Their introduction and placement alongside God and the devil as equally powerful and valid shows a broader world view than traditional religious beliefs and contrasts starkly with the confidence in these beliefs demonstrated in Marlowe's play. Goethe chooses to finish his work not with the Christian image of salvation but with a paean to the mysterious 'Eternal Womanhood'<sup>xxiv</sup>. Despite the emphasis in some branches of Christianity on the role of the Virgin Mary, this other female figure appears to have greater ties to the classical or pagan religions explored throughout Part Two of the play. The second volume both begins and ends with feminine, non-Christian figures, in contrast to the triumvirate of males (God, the devil and Faust) who represent the Christian worldview. In both the beginning and end these feminine characters bring sleep or healing, again in contrast to the three males. This emphasis on the pagan and feminine throughout Book Two shows less of a critique than a simple dismissal of traditional Christianity.

<sup>17</sup> Throughout Scene 7 of *Faust: Part One* Mephistopheles mocks the system of learning presented in universities, especially to the Student who arrives hoping to gain knowledge. Source: Goethe, *Faust Part One*, pp. 56-61.



S Gutnick Allen

However, this play is more complicated to have as its theological goal simply a refutation of the existing religious order. At the same time as recognizing that according to traditional Christianity Faust should not have been saved, the reader wonders why Goethe himself wanted to save his character. Redner suggests that it is the striving quality, evident in his search for power and knowledge beyond the human scope, of Faust that redeems him in the eyes of the author<sup>xxv</sup>; this would fit with Goethe's classicist, humanist position<sup>18</sup>. In *Faust: Part Two*, an Angel specifically says that 'He who strives and lives to strive/ Can earn redemption still.'<sup>xxvi</sup> Luke has suggested in his introduction to his translation that Goethe abandons entirely the Christian paradigm in order to express a new spirituality based on the very characteristic that damns him in the eyes of Christianity: dissatisfaction with the world as it is<sup>xxvii</sup>. Faust as a character is in fact redeemed by his dissatisfaction with the world and his resulting continuous striving for the perfection of the individual will. One striking example of Faust's human ambition to override and conquer Nature occurs in Scene 14 of *Faust: Part Two* when, speaking to Mephistopheles, he says that 'Never/ have I felt such great strength for bold endeavor...I'll ban the lordly sea, I'll curb its force,/I'll set new limits to that watery plain...This is my will'<sup>xxviii</sup> after bemoaning that the waves are 'Breaker upon breaker, all their power upheaved/ And then withdrawn, not a thing achieved!/I watch dismayed, almost despairingly,/this useless elemental energy![in contrast to human energy, which has a direction and purpose]'<sup>xxix</sup>

From these two examples, we can see that the myth of Faust can be used in a variety of ways. Marlowe's interpretation is more clearly in line with the orthodox views held by the Church and the population at the time, and in accordance with the propagators of the original story. In contrast, Goethe's play, while using the same basic framework, abandons this ostensibly pious interpretation and instead uses it to put forward a celebration of man's ability to look at the world critically and to engage in a continual process of renewal and improvement, allowing for the ultimate transcendence of the

<sup>18</sup> If we return to the Prelude, we read the Poet asking with passion, 'Who divides up this dull monotonous drift/ Into a living rhythm? Who can lift/ Particular things into a general sense / Of some great music's sacred congruence?...The power of man, revealed in Poetry!'" (Scene 2, Lines 147-157) Source: Goethe, *Faust: Part One*, p.7.



S Gutnick Allen

religious dogma expressed by the earlier play. It is interesting that the same story can be used for such diverse purposes; such founding myths of our culture, and their development over time as popular attitudes change, may be one method of measuring these changes. In looking at the changing attitude towards religion, and at the extent of the traditional religious paradigm, the story of Faust, serves as a unique cultural barometer, as these two different interpretations of the tale show.

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- <sup>i</sup> Healy, Thomas. "Doctor Faustus." *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*. Ed. Patrick Cheney. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 174-192, p. 174
- <sup>ii</sup> Kott, Jan. 'The Two Hells of Doctor Faustus: A Polytheatrical Vision.' *The Bottom Translation: Marlowe and Shakespeare and the Carnival Tradition*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1987, trans: Lillian Vallee, p. 3.
- <sup>iii</sup> Marlowe, Christopher. 'Dr. Faustus' in *The Complete Plays*. London: Penguin Books, 2003, p.395, line 8.
- <sup>iv</sup> Tydeman, William. *Doctor Faustus: Text and Performance*. London: Macmillon Publishers, 1984, p. 18.
- <sup>v</sup> Brockbank, J. P. *Marlowe: Dr. Faustus*. London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1962, p.9.
- <sup>vi</sup> Marlowe, Christopher. *The Complete Plays*, p.393, lines 79-80
- <sup>vii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370, lines 82-3
- <sup>viii</sup> Healy, Thomas. 'Doctor Faustus' in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, p. 177
- <sup>ix</sup> Marlowe, Christopher. *The Complete Plays*, p. 348, lines 41-50.
- <sup>x</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360, lines 1-10.
- <sup>xi</sup> Kott, Jan. *The Bottom Translation: Marlowe and Shakespeare and the Carnival Tradition*, p. 17
- <sup>xii</sup> Healy, Thomas. 'Doctor Faustus' in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, p. 181
- <sup>xiii</sup> White, Paul Whitfield. "Marlowe and the Politics of Religion." *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*. Ed. Patrick Cheney. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 70-89, p. 84
- <sup>xiv</sup> Marlowe, Christopher. *The Complete Plays*, p. 361, line 48.
- <sup>xv</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 362, line 65.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Goethe. *Faust: Part One*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987. trans. David Luke, p. 11, line 308.
- <sup>xvii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.
- <sup>xviii</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42, lines 1336-1337
- <sup>xix</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34, lines 1051-1052
- <sup>xx</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52, line 1716
- <sup>xxi</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51, lines 1675-1677
- <sup>xxii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10; lines 282-292
- <sup>xxiii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39, lines 1236-1237.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Goethe. *Faust: Part Two*. trans. David Luke. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. trans. David Luke, p. 239, line 12110.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Redner, Harry. *In the Beginning was the Deed: Reflections on the Passage of Faust*. Berkely: University of California Press, 1982, p. 201
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Goethe, *Faust: Part Two*, p. 234, lines 11936-11937
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Luke, David. 'Introduction to *Faust: Part One*'. p. 32
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Goethe, *Faust: Part Two*, p. 179, lines 10183-102333.
- <sup>xxix</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180, lines 10216-10219.

S Gutnick Allen

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